NATIONAL SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD FOR BIOSECURITY

Working Group on Communication of Dual Use Research Results, Methods, and Technologies

Working Group Roster

Voting Members:

- P. Keim (Chair)
- A. Casadevall
- L. Enquist
- D. Franz
- J. Gordon
- S. Ehrlich
- S. Lemon
- A. Sorensen
- T. Shenk

Federal Agency Representatives:

- B. Cuccherini (VA)
- D. Dixon (NIH)
- T. Lomax (NASA)
- B. Lushniak (FDA)
- S. Nightingale (HHS)
- S. Steele (DoJ)
- M. Schmolesky (State)
- R. Walters (Intel.)

NSABB Charge

- The NSABB Charter states that the NSABB is to “advise on national policies governing publication, public communication, and dissemination of dual use research methodologies and results.”

Working Group Charge

- **Develop guidance and tools to:**
  - **Facilitate consistent and well-considered decisions about communication of information with biosecurity implications**
  - **Demonstrate to the public that scientists recognize, and are being responsive to, concerns about the security implications of their work**

Communication Tools

- Principles for the responsible communication of research with dual use potential
- Points to consider (i.e. a framework) for identifying and assessing risks and benefits of communicating research information with dual use potential, including options for the communication of such research
- Considerations for the development of a communication plan for research with dual use potential

Communication Tools

- **Possible uses:**
  - **Review**
    - **Research proposals**
    - **Manuscripts**
    - **Presentations (oral, abstract, posters)**
    - **Internet postings**
  - **Education tool**
    - **Raise awareness of DUR issues within the scientific community**
    - **Ethics training**

Communication Tools

- **Possible users:**
  - **Investigators and research supervisors**
  - **Students, postdocs and others involved in the research**
  - **Institutional biosecurity review entity**
  - **Proposal reviewers**
  - **Funding agencies/institutions**
  - **Government policy makers**
  - **Journal editors, reviewers and publishers**

Outreach to Stakeholders

- Outreach to peers by Working Group members
- Panel Discussion with IBC community, scientists, security policy experts
- Roundtable with editors of scientific journals, including international community

Feedback: Communication Tools

- Liked idea of having tools to formalize or systematize review process
- Liked idea of using tools in ethics training courses

Feedback: Communication of Dual Use Research

- Agreed with emphasizing the importance of how information is presented
- Stressed value of scientists working to enhance public understanding of their research
- Suggested strategies for engaging the general media (e.g. Science Media Center in the UK)

Feedback: Assessment Framework

- Concern that every manuscript submitted for publication would be subject to assessment for dual use potential
- Format of a questionnaire to be completed invoked ‘regulatory burden’ fears
- Framework should be shorter, not a form to be filled out, but rather ‘Points to Consider’
  - PToC format would be useful as a hyperlink for submitting authors and for manuscript reviewers and editors conducting biosecurity reviews

Feedback: DUR as an International Issue

- Dual use research issues not a high a priority in Europe and Asia. Higher priority are public health and infectious diseases
- Frame issues more broadly in terms of well being to mankind rather than US national security concern
- UK has a mechanism for editors to ensure authors have alerted public health authorities in particular circumstances when a publication may cause public concern (e.g. vaccine adverse reactions)

Communication Tools

- **Principles for the responsible communication of research with dual use potential**
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Principles for Responsible Communication

- **Principles that underpin the responsible communication of dual use research findings**
  - Communication is vital for scientific progress
  - Communicate research to the fullest extent possible
  - Need for balance
  - Need to assess risks and benefits of communicating information
  - Consider a range of communication options
  - Communication occurs throughout the research process
  - Need to consider <u>what</u> is communicated, and the <u>way</u> in which it is communicated

Principles for Responsible Communication

- **Added:**
  - **Public trust is essential to the vitality of the life science research enterprise.**

    It has always been important for life scientists to participate in activities that enhance public understanding of their research.

    Because of the potential for public misunderstanding of, and concerns about dual use research, it is especially important that life scientists engage in outreach on a regular basis to raise awareness of the importance of the research and to reassure the public that the research is being conducted and communicated responsibly.

Communication Tools

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Points to Consider (Assessment Framework)

- Re-formatted questionnaire into a points to consider document – users can tailor and format for their specific purpose(s)
- Key features:
  - General Overview of Information
  - Risk Analysis
  - Benefit Analysis
  - Risk vs. Benefit Assessment
  - Formulation of Recommendation Regarding Communication

Points to Consider (Assessment Framework)

- **Formulation of Recommendation Regarding Communication**
  - **Decisions about how to responsibly communication research with dual use potential should address content, timing and extent of distribution of the information**

Points to Consider (Assessment Framework)

Content	Communicate as is
	Addition of contextual Information
	Modify or remove substantive information
Timing	Communicate immediately
	Delay communication
Distribution	No limit on distribution
	Limit distribution on a 'need to know basis'
	Don't communicate

- **Added footnote:**
  - **The relevance and/or feasibility of considering limits on the distribution of dual use research will depend on the specific situation.**

    E.g., while limiting distribution is not a consideration for most scientific journals, it might be a reasonable consideration early on in a research project that yielded information of special significance to public health or national security.

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Communication Plan

- Critical part of decision to communicate
  - Not only what is said, but how it is said
  - Promotes public understanding and trust

Ongoing Tasks

- Statement regarding the importance of communicating findings from life sciences research

Oversight Framework Considerations

- When and how should dual use research communications be reviewed?
  - Identify key points along the research continuum
  - Determine necessary expertise for reviewers
  - Consider oversight strategies for research not initially identified as dual use

Recommendation to the NSABB

- The Communications Working Group requests the NSABB consider approving these work products as components of an oversight framework for addressing dual use research of concern